

Nirmal Kumar Bose Memorial Lecture 2006

Understanding Tribal Transformation In India
Integration of the Tribes in the Indian Society : A View from Orissa

by

Lakshman Kumar Mahapatra



Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
New Delhi



Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose
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UNDERSTANDING TRIBAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA

My Personal Encounter and Ekalavyaship with Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose

Apart from his vast scholarship, both in humanities and social sciences on one hand, and in physical sciences such as geology on the other, his personality was suffused with affection, kindness, charity and compassion, in effect, with humanity. My first encounter took place in 1949-50 when he learnt of my stomach ailments and visited me with *ayurvedic* medicines at my hostel in the Calcutta University Campus at Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta. He had obviously come to know of me as a student in anthropology from Orissa from my teachers, but he must have made extra effort to know about my health condition. I had gone to him along with some senior students, though rarely at his place of teaching Geography at a far off University building.

Whatever I had learnt from him was through his informal discussion or by listening to his public lectures, in which he kept his audience spell-bound. Therefore, I was one of the fortunate students to have learnt from him as an *Ekalavya*, without being directly his student. So were Prof. Surajit Sinha, Prof. B.K. Roy Burman, Prof. P.K. Bhowmik and a host of others.

I am singularly fortunate today to have got this opportunity at IGNCA to reminisce on my intellectual debt to him and to express my personal homage to this great soul of India.

I. The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption

The scheduled tribes of India, as are officially recognized in India, will be referred to as "tribes" in this lecture.

Late Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose had devoted a lot of attention and research effort to the tribes in India. His book on Tribal Life in India published by the National Book Trust of India in 1971 was an excellent, though brief, survey of the tribal culture, society and economy. It presented the basic, yet, vital, information base of all categories of tribal groups, from hunters, fishers, gatherers, shifting cultivators, peasants, artisans, nomadic and pastoral groups to agriculturists.

Professor Nihar Ranjan Ray, while delivering the Introductory Address at the National Seminar on the Tribal Situation in India in 1969, identified the term *Jana* in ancient Indian literature as what we know as 'tribe'. According to Ray these *janas* "whom we have been taught to call 'tribes', were indeed different from the other communities of people only in the sense that they continued to remain...... outside the control of the *jati* system of social organization." However, a little earlier (p.9) he identified *jati* as "the socio-religious cum economic organization." (Ray, 1972: 9-10).

In ancient India, the tribal people, mostly inhabiting the hills and forests and isolated places, must have come in contact with the Hindu peasants, artisans etc. in a slow and continuous contact through centuries. Prof. Bose graphically describes this process: one person, two persons, one family, two families came into contact with their Hindu neighbours; and in course of time became attached to the Hindu economic system, and then were absorbed partially within the social fold also. This tension between one section of the people and another was hardly of a serious nature; because none was very poor, and none very rich. Moreover, while the tribal folk were attracted by the gods and goddesses of the Hindus, the latter on their part quite often adopted the gods and goddesses of the tribal people as well.

He has dwelt with this process of slow, often unobtrusive, mode of absorption of Hindu rituals and other cultural traits by the tribal folk in his seminal conceptualization of "the Hindu Method of

Tribal Absorption" reprinted in Science and Culture. (Bose, 1941, Vol. VII No. 4).

Prof. Bose had been a nationalist to the core and had interrupted his studies several times to participate in the movements initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. As an anthropologist, Bose was interested in the question of culture contact and acculturation, as this was important in our national life in the context of our efforts to establish a democratic way of life in India. He remembers that "within the entire framework of the caste society there was a broad class division into those who enjoyed privileges incommensurate with their services to society, and another, who were deprived of the privileges of education, legal and social equality in spite of labouring hard all their lives and in spite of belonging to a common social organization." (Bose, 1953: 163-164). He, however, also knows that "the subjugated classes did not rise in revolt because Hindu society assured to them a certain minimum of economic security which they could not attain under their own tribal productive system, particularly after the latter had been affected by conquest or Hindu encroachment upon the more fertile portions of the land." (Bose, 1953: 164). He finds a partial explanation in the Hindu policy of *laissez faire* with regard to the social and religious practices of tribal peoples, even when they came within Hinduism with the iniquitous economic and social structure, and this cultural autonomy may partly have been responsible for keeping the subjugated tribes satisfied and also for taking the edge off their discontent to a certain extent. (cf. ibid.). Further, monopolistic guild-like organization in the craft or special service coupled with the differentiation of occupation while creating a new *jati* must have guaranteed or tried to guarantee monopoly in a particular occupation to each caste, including the new tribe being absorbed into the Hindu fold. (cf. 1953: 163). "The last point is very important; for, the same *jati* may be found practising slightly different trades if it finds the prescribed hereditary occupation no longer economically satisfactory. But the careful way in which correspondence was established between

jati and occupation is proof of what the economic and social legislators of ancient India had in mind. They tried to build up a social organization on the basis of hereditary monopolistic guilds. **That lay at the base of the caste system."** Bose finds that *"capitalism has, in modern times, completely upset the old productive organization, (and) we are witnessing the fast decay of the entire social system of ancient India. Today we are also witnessing the rise of the middle classes on the one hand, and of the proletariat on the other; and each of these two classes draws recruits from all the ancient castes without discrimination."* (1953: 163, word and emphasis added).

He finds many *jatis* have come into being by differentiation of occupation, when the Hindu society had assigned a certain place for the tribes or peoples living outside India who came into our country. It is, however, "absolutely certain that some *jatis* are undoubtedly of tribal origin, and this has been the result of a **conscious plan** of Hindu society to dominate over and absorb tribal groups within its economic and social framework. It may be recalled in this connection that some of the untouchable castes have cultural traits which clearly show their affiliation and indicate their tribal origin." (Bose, 1953: 162, emphasis added). However, when Bose mentions of a **"conscious plan of Hindu society"**, as mentioned above, some scholars may demur in the light of the sample cases he took for study.

All these considerations must have tormented his liberal mind when he went to find out the sample cases of Hindu mode of tribal absorption among the *Juang* of Pal Lahara in Orissa hills, the Manda Parab celebrated by the *Munda* and *Oraon* tribal groups, and the third one of the *Muchi* shoe makers and leather workers in the throes of a reform movement. (cf. Bose, 1953: 156-160).

We may specifically refer here to his *Juang* case for illumination of the best documented situation. Bose found in 1928 that the *Juang* of Pal Lahara ex-princely state in North Orissa have started worshipping the Hindu goddess Lakshmi and

emulating Hindu rituals, and very marginally though, still sticking to the sacrifice of fowls to propitiate their deities, and to their old practice of beef and carrion eating. This he observed along with another powerful change taking place at the same time. The government had taken away the right of the *Juang* to hunt and practice shifting cultivation by burning patches of forest as they needed. Rendered very vulnerable, they have found some economic security by taking up manufacture of bamboo basket etc., enjoying a virtual monopoly in this economic niche in the region. As this is a very low occupation, no other caste in the region would take this up. This was both a drive as also a substantial incentive to take up a caste-like exclusive occupation, which was thus assured to them by the local Hindu society. (cf. Bose, 1941). **Obviously, there was hardly any conscious plan of incorporation of the *Juang* in the local Hindu society, as mentioned earlier by Prof. Bose.**

He draws certain conclusions on the nature of cultural process of change operating in the Hindu society. I quote him "These are occasional fissions within one caste, as well as an absorption of tribal groups from outside into the pale of Hindu social organization. New recruits like the *Juangs* or the *Mundas* may not exactly now be called Hindu castes, for they have yet retained their independent social rites which are not ruled over by Brahmins. But here perhaps we see the operation of a method by means of which the Hindus absorbed tribal groups within their own system."(Bose, 1953: 161).

Even after social incorporation, the tribal people could continue to worship their earlier gods and goddesses without let or hindrance. "Thus the cultural distinction between the absorbed and the absorbing communities also tended to become indistinct on account of mutual give and take." However, there would be no intermarriage; "yet distances between different elements were not sharpened." (p. 220, MII: 1969). But, "in economic life the traffic was nearly one way, while in regard to higher forms of beliefs and rituals, there was more interchange, and a greater measure of autonomy and of diversity" (Bose, MII, 1970:336).

Prof. Bose refers to the long course of contact between themselves and the neighbouring peasants and artisan folks and their way of life in the plains and river valley, when the tribal folk specialized, after such contact, in the production of goods based upon the resources available in their forest dwellings, and sold them to the peasant folk for money or bartered them for paddy or millets. They have thus occupied an economic niche in the local productive organization based on caste specializations. However, and Bose obviously deplores, "undoubtedly, in the Hindu social system, the tribes, after absorption, are assigned a lowly position; something which is comparable to that of colonials in an imperial economy. But, it should be observed that all communities were not treated in this manner." (Bose, MII, 1970: 335). Bose then refers to other situations among the tribes, when there were families of chieftains; and these were assigned a place in the *Kshatriya* and not the *Sudra* varna. But those who were favoured formed a small minority, while the majority were placed in a subordinate position in the local hierarchy." (Bose, MII, 1970: 335). He also notes two other features in this process of absorption without anything to do with economic relationships. "The incorporated communities who became like castes were left free to follow the religion and social ceremonies of their own choice; while upper caste Hindus also quite often paid homage to the gods and goddesses who had entered their pantheon in company with the absorbed communities. Sometimes, again, Hindu Sadhus retired into the fastnesses inhabited by tribal communities, established ashrams there, or built a small temple, and tried to live their own life of simplicity and austerity. This had undoubtedly some effect upon the tribal population; and it was in this way that an exchange of gods and goddesses, and of different ways of life, took place in the past over the centuries. This was like a process of osmosis in the field of higher culture." (ibid. 336).

However, Bose finds reason to believe that "elasticity which is noticed in the Hindu social system was considerably reduced after the establishment of Muslim rule in our country. Social policy

became hardened; and we can imagine that the absorption of tribes into the Hindu fold also became a little more difficult because of the growth of Brahminical orthodoxy." (Bose: MII,1970: 336).

He then takes up the emergence of the Bhakti cults in Hinduism when saints such as Nanak, Chaitanya, Kabir, Tulsidas and Surdas gave a call to the people to shake off formalism and rigidity of rituals and to live a life of devotion and spirituality. This led to an awakening among the lowly castes and some tribal communities. "Thus, the *Mundas* of Tamar Pargana in Ranchi, the Tana Bhagats and Kabirpanthis among the *Oraons* of the same district; the *Meithei* and *Tripuri* of Manipur and Tripura, and some of the neighbouring communities in Tirap in NEFA, became deeply influenced by various forms of the Bhakti cult. Such tribes thus entered the Hindu fold, not through the doorway of caste, but through religious sects which gave them an honoured and equal status with others." (MII: 1970: 337).

The liberal-minded Bose is at pains to compare and contrast this process of tribal absorption with the social system in the Soviet Union of those days. The Soviet Union did not leave any freedom to tribal peoples to pursue their own old form of economic life, which is almost always of very low productive capacity. The whole Union works under the plans settled for it in central headquarters, and the tribal people were sought to be brought into line with them as fast as practicable. In India, he notes, there was never such conscious, centralized and large-scale planning. Such centralization was in fact not possible under the existing conditions of transport and intercommunication. "An economic adaptation arrived at by a particular group of people under the stress of local circumstances was made permanent by custom and then by law, and, in this way, small decentralized, more or less self-sufficient economic units were built up in large numbers all over the country. Another point of difference was that in these monopolistic trade-guilds admission was, almost exclusively, by birth; whereas, in the Soviet Union, it is through apprenticeship and on the basis of personal capabilities. This is difference number one."

"Number two is that in Russia, the State interferes as little as possible with the culture of the tribal peoples. On the other hand, there is a decided endeavour on the part of the Union to encourage a development of national vernaculars and of national songs and festivals.....". (Bose, 1953: 167). Also a scientific way of life in place of tribal way of life is always emphasized which may lead to greater uniformity of culture in Soviet Union.

On the other side of the story, the Soviet Union directly encourages change from the **unwanted survivals**, and brooks no inequality on the score of race or creed while, unfortunately, the Brahmins very often put a stop to progress and higher standards of culture being followed by the subjugated groups. This is forcefully brought out when Rama killed Sambuka, the Shudra, who aspired to attain spiritual excellence reserved for the twice-born *varnas*. (cf. Bose, 1953: 168-169). Very interestingly it has been sought to be derived from the Brahmin's catholic belief in "permanent necessity of many forms of culture fitted to the different stages of mental development." (cf. Bose, 1953: 169). Prof. Nirmal K. Bose asserts that "this Hindu method of tribal absorption is entirely different from the methods practised by the Christian or the Islamic peoples." (Bose, 1953: 167). Most probably, this is because, he did not find any conscious and planned rupture with the tribal culture and rituals, which conversion into Islam or Christianity entails. "The tribes retained the principal elements of their faith and practice, though these were modified to a greater or less extent. In addition, they shared some of the gods and goddesses, and even participated in the social festivals and ceremonies of their Brahminical neighbours, without any effort on the part of the latter for conversion. That participation did not turn them into Hindus." (Bose, 1971: 66). Prof. Bose then provides the diacritical markers of full absorption in the Hindu fold: "if Brahmin priests perform Brahminical ceremonies for them during the three critical events of birth, marriage and death." (ibid.). If the latter are still celebrated by tribal rituals or by tribal priests, they are considered still true to their tribal faith, but participate in

some of the ceremonies of their Hindu neighbours "in the outer fringes of their culture." (cf. Bose, ibid.).

Lest it is wrongly assumed that Professor Bose had invested the changing traditional tribal culture in Hindu fold with all the advantages even in the modern context, he has made several observations to expose its limitations. He says, "even from the earliest periods of recorded history, it is apparent that India tried to build more for peace than for war. There was an abundance of the bounties of nature which all could share, particularly when the population had not become too heavy." He had pointed out as another lecture "how different forms of religious beliefs and practices, and even ways of life, were allowed to thrive within the structure of the caste system. India tried to build up an organization of differences rather than a unity of the Semitic kind, where differences are levelled down." (Bose, MII, 1970:346).

He admits, "caste had one merit; it was non-competitive in its aim. But under it, a whole community was treated as a unit, under which the individual was lost in subordination. Caste also divided men into privileged and unprivileged. All these can be avoided in India's new system of production. But for that purpose, one need not, at the same time, discard the better elements in caste, one of which was that society and the king were ultimately responsible for the final welfare of the community and of the individual. Secondly, different communities were so organized that they played complementary roles in both production and distribution." Bose forcefully suggests: "it is quite possible to plan for a society ruled by equality and justice, and formed by co-operating professional associations, whose joint purpose will be to assure prosperity by the application of scientific inventions, and yet avoid the concentration of wealth at certain points." (Bose, MII, 1970, 347-348).

The point of departure of Professor Bose's study was the culture change and acculturation situation in such interactions

between the tribal and Hindu cultures. He concludes by noting the "very important part played by economic matters even in the sphere of social and cultural relations." **He generalizes further**, "culture, as we have already indicated, flows from a politically and economically dominant group to a subservient one. In social matters too, the former occupies a higher status in contrast to the latter. *From this, we may venture to suggest with regard to current problems in our national life, that if we wish to set the Juang, the Munda or the so-called untouchable castes shoulder to shoulder with ourselves in a democratically organized society, we should make sure of economic reorganization first, if we want to build the new social order on a permanent basis*." (Bose, 1953: 169-170, emphasis added). After reviewing the success of the Gandhian movement in spreading the awareness of and psychological transformation in the attitudes to the wrongs perpetrated on the suppressed classes under Hinduism, he persists with his thesis stridently: **"unless this movement is backed by a revolutionary change in economic relations at the same time it will not succeed in undoing the social wrongs permanently**." (Bose, 1953: 170, emphasis added).

We have heard here the very clear message from a savant and a seer to guide the country's leadership and intelligentsia, when the planning paraphernalia and the think tank of the nationalists were still groping for a breakthrough, long before Independence. What is even more unfortunate is the fact that his prescription is true and relevant even today, about seventy years after presenting his conceptualization supported with empirical studies!

II. Tribal Transformation during Colonial Times and After Independence

Under the British occupation a new phase of relationship between the tribal communities and the low land dwellers came into being. During the nineteenth century many traders, moneylenders and valley peasants began to penetrate into the

inaccessible areas under the protection of the British Government. The old regime of interactions on rather mutual give and take with the authorities of the tribal groups was disrupted. In Bose's words, "they went into the hills and jungles, sold goods and lent money, purchased the produce of the jungle at low rates (*often on the principle of forward trading*). Eventually, some of them established zamindaries and proceeded to till the land more successfully than the tribal folk with their limited resources ever could." (Bose, MII, 1970: 337, words in parenthesis added). There was, indeed, a great qualitative difference between the new class of traders and farmers when compared with those in the earlier era of contacts. "It led to exploitation, because the tribal folk did not know how to protect themselves against deceit and usury." (ibid.) There was also no intention of welding the two communities into an integrated whole in contrast with the earlier era of contact and interrelations.

Throughout the nineteenth and some part of the twentieth century there had been uprisings or rebellions against land alienation, rackrenting, and usury by the outsiders, which were suppressed with a firm hand. However, Bose gives credit to the Government for bringing some relief to the oppressed and exploited tribes. The Government intervened to secure their land rights and control of money lenders. However, the whole economy of the country was being recast in the mould of free enterprise, leading to exploitation of indentured tribal labourers in the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal under the British planters. Bose sarcastically observes, "where British commercial interest were concerned, the conscience of the Government does not seem to have been touched by the sufferings of the tribal people."

When the British power was withdrawn and India attained Independence, some important steps were taken to protect the interests of the tribes under the Constitution of India. Now, equality of treatment to all citizens without any discrimination is assured; through adult franchise, political power is sought to be shared even at the lowest levels. By means of a series of protective laws

the rights of the tribal people over land have been safeguarded and illegal land alienation in tribal areas has been checked. In special exclusive tribal areas, such as in northeastern states, the tribal communities have been empowered to retain or modify their tribal customs in their discretion. District and Regional Council with sufficient autonomy have been constituted to carry on administration as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. In the Fifth Schedule states in tribal areas with majority of the tribal folk residing along with the non-tribal minority, they have been protected from the operation of those laws inimical to the tribal interests and rights. The Governor of the concerned state has been given responsibility to report on the governance and protection to the President of India.

As the whole of India has been undergoing a sea change at great pace under planned economic development, the tribal communities are fully affected, especially when development projects and programmes are implemented in their areas. Bose refers to the unprecedented scale and pace of development, to these areas which are rich in mineral wealth and where industries are being established, leading for which the tribal folk are not adequately prepared to take advantage of the opportunities unleashed by these projects and programmes, or to protect themselves from the inexorable onslaught of the external agencies. The latter usually bring in skilled, semi-skilled and even unskilled workers to take up the activities, for which the local tribal folk are often not trained or familiarized. Prof. Bose, who obviously believed in, and relied upon, central planning for development, argued, "It is uneconomic to wait until the local inhabitants are trained sufficiently to man the industries." So, labourers are recruited from other regions to set the industries going as quickly as possible. (Bose, MII, 1970: 339-340).

Once he had accepted the inevitability of the induction of outside labourers in a massive scale, he goes out to imaginatively visualize the cultural and social consequences and associations, which may have some unexpected and serious implications for

the local tribal people as also for the country as a whole. Firstly, the immigrant labourers tend to live in a cluster when there is a chance to do so. They follow their regional cultural ties or ethnic ties, to establish clusters, such as Oriya and Tamil, or *Munda* and *Saora* clusters. "In course of time each such regional group also establishes its temples and clubs in order to preserve its distinctive identity. The food, dress and general manner of living tend to be sharply marked off from one another." (Bose, MII, 1970: 340).

Secondly, as for the local tribal population it results in a traumatic situation, when it finds itself thrown into sharp contrast with the immigrant labourers. "Rightly or wrongly, the tribal people feel that justice is not being done to those who have lost their homes or agricultural land on account of industrial establishments, while others from outside are being employed in all the lucrative posts". (ibid.). If they are not re skilled or trained and not absorbed in the new job opportunities fast enough, there is a chain of reactions leading to unhappy situations. As the local and immigrant labourers are estranged as in Assam and elsewhere today, there are interethnic clashes and even violent, deliberate actions against the intrusion of outsiders. Under these conditions there is often a keen desire among the separate local tribes to sink their internal differences, and as a measure of self defense, combine against the outsiders. (cf. Bose, ibid.).

Then Bose generalizes on the social process involved. "But when there is a fear of loss of identity, it leads in several parts of India to a two-pronged process: one leads the tribes, willy-nilly into greater participation in technological change, and the other, to a re-establishment of their separate identity in contrast with the rest by a search for certain distinctive elements in their original culture." (ibid.). Indeed, here Bose's hunch has been true and tested. In Jamshedpur when Tata Steel Company and other factories have drawn several cognate, yet separate tribal groups together from Jharkhand and neighbouring Orissa region, the tribal groups, such as *Santal*, *Munda* and *Ho* have come to forge an inter-ethnic solidarity group by sinking their distinctive ethnic

separateness, welding together into an expanded tribal identity separate from other tribal and non-tribal groups. In a different context, the *Saora* tribal tea garden plantation labourers from South Orissa have evinced greater participation in technological adaptation, perhaps in competition with other tribal groups. Thus, one finds rather illiterate *Saora* tribal workers as rather proficient in some mechanical capacities in tea processing factories. (Personal communication from late Nabakrushna Choudhury, the former Chief Minister of Orissa).

Now Bose considers how the exercise of adult franchise has brought about an unfortunate acceleration of the process of *cultural polarization* among the tribal groups. As new professional associations geared to the modern industrial and commercial conditions have not grown fast enough, "it is natural that, for the sake of mutual assistance and survival, people would take refuge in associations on basis of language or religion, for these can grow up more easily." (Bose, MII, 70:341). There was no institutional mechanism available to cut across smaller, archaic loyalties based on caste, kinship or commonness of birthplace or religion. (cf. ibid.).

Bose then goes out for the theoretical musing on social change. "Thus the slow rate of social change, and the lag between it and the rate of technological change, has been responsible to a large extent in throwing people back upon comparatively archaic forms of social identification. This has led the tribal communities of India today into a new kind of relationship with non-tribal people, which is quite different from anything which happened in the past. Then, contact was on a comparatively small scale and spread over long periods of time. Today, the contact is swift and on a massive scale. This has led to tensions and unnecessary obstructions in the way of technological and social advancement." (ibid.).

Here, I must confess, Professor Bose did not want to go further in his analysis, as others like Martin Orans have done. The latter was not weighed down by the analysis of the ancient Indian

anchoring of tribal absorption in Hindu society for advancement in status relationships. The tribal people, at least some of them in Jamshedpur region, turned their attention to the *political rank path*, so that the political participation on basis of pursuit of their solidarity as a tribe would eventually yield dividends in the form of employment and social and political position in the urban-industrial community. (cf. Orans, 1965: 90-93 ff). However, in 1959 Prof. Bose had noted that, "the growth of "tribalism" or "Nationalism" has been the new concern which Christianized, Westernized and advanced sections of tribals have begun to exercise towards their unconverted tribal brethren. A wave of new friendship .....is sweeping...... It is leading to some of the educated and urbanized folk to rediscover new merits in their ancient culture. Christian churches are being 'nationalized', and tribals are advised to preserve their clan names, surnames, dresses etc." (Bose, MII: 1959 quoted in S. Mahapatra, 1986: 52).

Prof. Bose then turns his attention to the mechanisms and institutions for rapidly reducing the inequalities in the body politic of India. He finds that the Indian Constitution has set up an ideal of building up an *exploitation-free* society. Such a society may be realized when all help one another to build it up to the best of their ability (he means, arguably, also in all sectors of our economic and social life). Then, "the present inequalities will tend to disappear more rapidly than otherwise." (Bose, MII, 1970: 341).

He is, however, worried about a disturbing trend. Among the scheduled castes, their leadership has a tendency to share whatever benefits are being enjoyed by the privileged classes even under the existing circumstances. They do not give priority to eliminate the inequalities in a joint endeavour along with the other elites. He is pained that, "such a desire is also evident among some sections of tribal leadership. Such trends have given rise to a desire among the tribal people in some border regions of India to cut themselves off from India. Such a desire may arise, firstly, because there is a lack of confidence in the intentions of the Nation's leadership to build up a truly equalitarian society. Secondly, it

may also be due to the desire of building up a state where some will thrive at the expense of many – a repetition of the exploitative society under which we are all living, and which prevailed in India for centuries in the past." (Bose, MII, 1970: 342).

"The commitment to the ideals of a socialistic pattern of society is not yet firmly established among the leaders of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes as it ought to be." (ibid.). However, Prof. Bose does not blame their leadership so much, as he believes, "the burden of building up a social organization of the new kind lies more with the rest than with those who have so long been relegated to the backwaters of life. If the majority can prove by their action that they mean to stick to the national decision, and will make every effort to eradicate poverty and inequality, there is no reason to suppose that the backward classes of today will not respond warmly to that call." (Bose, ibid.). In 1970 what he meant by the "backward classes" here, actually comprised the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. If he were alive to revise this statement later on, he would have surely included the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes, who were earlier known as Other Backward Classes by the term used: "backward classes".

Similarly, when he wanted the majority non-backward sections, that is, the *civil society* in the present jargon, to take up the responsibility for making every effort to eradicate poverty and inequality, the society in India was perhaps not yet attuned to such deliberate action as was expected. The functioning of the Panchayat at the three levels, namely, Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti at the Block level and the Gram Panchayat had never fulfilled their mandate and official responsibilities to plan and carry out programmes and projects to specifically benefit the weaker sections.

As the statutory Commissioner of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Prof. Bose had observed and deplored this lapse on the part of the civil society in various projects. As regards the Tribal Development Blocks initiated since 1956, "An opinion has

been expressed that the tribal development blocks are no viable units for an integrated and comprehensive development of the regions inhabited by the Tribal Communities and that the benefits have accrued mainly to the more advanced sections, who are capable of bringing pressure at the block Headquarters. .... It may be added that there was nothing inherently wrong about the concept of Tribal Development Blocks. Due to an absence of attempt to mobilize local leadership, inefficient administration and a certain slack attitude of the officers in charge of the programme resulted in a certain amount of wastage and failure in the achievement of declared objectives....." (Bose, 1967, Vol. I: 80-81).

After surveying the scenario of development endeavour for the tribal and Scheduled Caste people of India, **Prof. Bose comes to a grim conclusion: "in the present state of our country, it is obvious that, if we decide to depend upon whatever resources we can command today, we should perhaps be better advised to try through education and organization to help all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to *modernize themselves largely through their own efforts*, although they must be assisted by both official as well as non-official agencies working towards the same end. It is only then that they can take their due share in the transformed system of production which we are all trying to build up in our country. It is also by means of this positive approach towards self-development that we can get rid of the inequalities which have been left over to us from the past."** (Bose, 1967, Vol. I: 14).

There is also another incontrovertible conclusion, which Professor Bose has reached while discussing the options for eradicating all forms of discrimination against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. He disagrees with many social reformers and political leaders who have argued in favour of lifting their economic condition for this purpose. In their view, this will automatically lead to the eradication of social discrimination. Prof. Bose does not agree with this view, for, "poverty alone is not the

cause of *untouchability* or social distance in Indian society." **"What is perhaps more needed today is an end of the superstition that some occupations are high and some low. When our whole productive organization is undergoing a process of change, it would perhaps be better to prepare every individual for participation in the new process of production, based as it should be on the application of science to both agriculture and industry**. *Perhaps those ideas have to be instilled with vigour, not only among the Scheduled Castes or Tribes, but more so upon the rest of the population, who actually exercise discrimination upon the less favoured members of the community.*" (Bose, 1967, Vol. I, A General Review: 12-13). In other words, he was aiming at an attitudinal change in the general population or the civil society. Why this is unavoidable we may understand by closely analyzing a case from Orissa. The *Juang*, a Scheduled Tribe, speaking a *Munda* language and eating beef are considered "untouchable" even by the *Hill Bhuiyan*, a neighbouring *Oriya*-speaking Scheduled Tribe, having the same economic and ecological base as have the *Juang* in Keonjhar district, formerly a feudatory state headed by a Hindu Prince in Orissa. The *Juang* are also considered *untouchable* by the local Hindu castes in Keonjhar. The *Hill Bhuiyan* do not eat beef and enjoy high ritual status, granted by the Hindu Raja. **Hence, unless and until the regional civil society sheds off their *superstition* around untouchability, the *Juang* will remain in the low status, in the considered view of Prof. Bose – as I understand him.**

The revolutionary change in the administrative structure through Panchayati Raj institutions had not led to serving the special interests of the weaker sections in the actual implementation of the development programmes, as noted by Prof. Bose, the Commissioner in his report for 1969-70. He says, "on account of the peculiar economic and social forces resulting in the dominance of higher castes and classes in sharing political and economic power, the weaker sections who are directly dependent on them for their livelihood are not benefiting from this arrangement…."

(Bose, 1969: 70; v). "**It is evident that on account of factors such as economic dependence on higher castes, social disabilities such as *untouchability*, extreme poverty and low level of literacy and civic consciousness, the interests of weaker sections not only tend to be neglected but also *deliberately ignored*, in Panchayati Raj institutions, unless programmes affecting their welfare are statutorily earmarked with specific outlays clearly apportioned.....**" **(ibid.: vi). He, therefore, recommended way back in 1969-70: "It is necessary that representation of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes should be secured in the Gram Panchayats and Anchal Panchayats in proportion to their population...."** (ibid.: vii).

It is a matter of great relief to the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes that Prof. Bose's ideas based on field studies have at last been acted upon by the Parliament by adopting the Seventy third Amendment Act, in 1992, providing for reservation of seats for these scheduled categories.

In the end, please allow me to thank the scholars, ladies and gentlemen here, who have patiently listened to his ideas, rather inadequately presented by me today.

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LECTURE-II

INTEGRATION OF THE TRIBES IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY : A VIEW FROM ORISSA

In the first lecture I tried to focus on Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose's ideas, values and vision on the Transformation of Tribal Society in India. Today the topic of my lecture is more tricky and more hazardous, as this is basically my own interpretation of the situation, which is not exclusively confined to Orissa. In Orissa State the tribes constituted 22.13% of the total population in 2001 Census. Only the states in the tribal majority areas had higher proportion of Scheduled Tribes than Orissa.

The tribal peoples who became a part of the process of political development in Orissa "from below" resulting in the rise of a number of small kingdoms became a part of this process, underwent "a continuous process of partial integration and Hindu indoctrination rather than a process of "sustained displacement". (cf. Kulke, 1993:5). For our purpose here, '*integration*' does not stand for '*assimilation*', which is a substitutive process. However, there is more commitment in a direction of change than mere co-existence, which may be adequate for '*syncretism*'.

Professor Bose had highlighted what happened at the fringe of the Hindu society, when the tribal communities were facing problems of survival. They adopted some new occupation or skill to create a new economic niche for themselves and in this process, there was some almost invariably initial process of **Hinduization**, however halting or slow it might be. I am now taking up other dimensions of **Hinduization** in the present lecture with Orissa in mind, after discussing briefly the concept of Sanskritization.

Prof. M.N. Srinivas had defined **Sanskritization** as "the process by which a "low" Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes in customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, "twice-born" caste. Generally such

changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community." (Srinivas, 1966:6). A tribe may undergo "**Sanskritization** claiming to be a caste, and therefore, Hindu." (cf. ibid. 7). This is the later expanded connotation of the concept of **Sanskritization**, which now includes the emulation by the tribal groups of the Hindu castes. Earlier, this concept of **Sanskritization** was applied only to the emulation of specific higher castes, especially the Brahmana and Kshatriya by lower castes *within* the Hindu society. In contrast to this concept applied to the tribes emulating the Hindu castes, I have always used the concept of **Hinduization** for the non-Hindu tribal people seeking either acceptance in the local Hindu society as a caste or acceptance of Hindu values, rituals and customs in an effort to gain higher status in the local society, even when it is not accepted as a caste. This concept, then, would parallel **Islamization** and **Hinduization**, as applied in Indonesia, from a non-Hindu or non-Islamic base. (cf. Srinivas, 1966; Shrieke, 1957: 237; Coedes, 1968: 15-16). Similarly, a derivative of the concept of **Hinduization** may be **de-Hinduization**, which was encountered in the middle of the last century among the *Santal* tribe when they deliberately withdrew from the process of **Hinduization** because of some external and internal forces. The strongest external force was the state-sponsored privileges of political, economic and educational reservations to aid their striving for higher social and secular status. (cf. Sitakanta Mahapatra, 1986; Orans, 1965; Gautam, 1978). In a similar movement of **de-Hinduization** the earstwhile Scheduled Castes in India have often called themselves *Dalit* (oppressed), and have converted themselves to Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism or to Islam.

In Orissa as in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Assam, many tribal chieftains are alleged to have been responsible for founding a large number of such princedoms including former princely states. (cf. Mahapatra 1987). The contribution of the tribal peoples of Orissa to the formation of ancient kingdoms, evolution of a large number

of castes and the development of the Jagannatha Cult, Lingaraj Cult and a few other regional cults in Orissa is remarkable. Because of the interaction of the tribal groups with the castes in Orissa, the caste system of Orissa region does not come anywhere near the most rigorous and the most discriminatory patterns of south India. The Scheduled Tribes, who are usually given a low status in the ritual hierarchy of the regional caste system are in many cases treated as equivalent to some clean castes. That sometimes means that the Brahmana may accept drinking water from them and may even serve them in their life-cycle rituals. This has come about because of their preponderance and political power in the hill regions of Orissa. (cf. Mahapatra 1977a). We shall examine in some details the specific cases of these events.

Unlike in the northeastern states of India most of the tribal people of Orissa are not set apart geographically, culturally, even in many instances racially or linguistically. Historically speaking, many of the tribal groups have formed the local peasants and other castes of Orissa. Oriya, the regional language of the State, happens to be the language which the large majority of the Scheduled Tribes speak as trade language and even as mother tongue. Many of these tribal groups or their sections have become Hinduized over the centuries or Christianized in recent decades. This has introduced a social and cultural split in the tribal society. After **Hinduization** or **Christianization** the transformed sections tend to remain endogamous, and sometimes continue to observe the totemic and other social restrictions and norms as in their traditional society. In recent decades, the educated sections of the tribes in many regions have organized solidarity and identity-reinforcing movements for the cultural, educational, and social progress of their tribal brethren. These are parallel to the movements and associations started by some of the Hindu castes for raising their status and solidarity. We may reasonably take such phenomenon as a process of social integration with the regional society in Orissa. In this process of **Hinduization** of tribal society, we have also to consider the almost concurrent **Tribalization** of the Hindu groups

in tribal territories, both ultimately contributing to social integration in the regional society from opposite direction.

There is some evidence to show how the king was instrumental in integrating minor tribal traditions with higher traditions through a process identified by Marriott (1955) as *universalization*. Thereby, the king has often taken some steps to make it easier for a hill tribe to become gradually accepted as a clean Hindu caste. We may consider one case from Orissa as an illustration. A Hill *Bhuiyan* priest was worshipping **Kanta-Kuanri**, a goddess allegedly represented by a *tantrik yantra* found by chance in the area. The Raja of Bonai came to learn of its importance in the *Hill Bhuiyan* lore and belief. He then arranged for the annual circuit of the goddess to go up to the palace temple of the state deity and back to the hill sanctuary. On the way, the goddess was worshipped by all castes and tribes inhabiting the villages, where the ritual procession came to scheduled halts. Gradually, the tribal goddess became allied to, and even identified with, a form of Durga, a Sanskritic goddess of the great tradition, and the *Bhuiyan* and other low priests of the goddess thus gained higher ritual and social status from the viewpoint of Hindu society (cf. Roy 1935: 104-177, Mahapatra, 1977).

In Hindu Orissa, there is a hierarchy of gods and goddesses, with the state deity, Lord Jagannatha at the top, and the minor tribal gods and spirits at the bottom. The recognition of this hierarchy, as well as the several grades of purity and pollution attached to different occupations and ethnic communities, belongs to an initial phase of the process of **Hinduization**. To this, we may add the other concessions granted by some particular king in his anxiety to woo the politically dominant tribal group in the region, the *Hill Bhuiyan*. Prominent among the concessions given were that water from the tribals was made acceptable to the Brahmana and all other castes, as if they were a clean Hindu caste and not *mlechha* (impure men of unknown low foreign descent), and that the washerman caste came to serve them at their life cycle rituals, as in the case of the clean Hindu castes. With this

background and anchorage on the fringe of the Hindu society, it did not take long for the landholding, dominant, and long-settled cultivators among the *Hill Bhuiyan*, inhabiting the open plateaus in Bonai and other parts of Sundargarh (who sometimes owned Zamindaris as vassals of Rajas of princely states), to become accepted as a clean Hindu caste of cultivators. They sometimes even claimed status equivalent to that of the militia-cultivator caste of *Khandâyat* (eg. *Khandâyat Bhuiyan, Pâik Bhuiyan, Prajâ Bhuiyan). (*cf. Roy, 1935; Appendix B, xi-xxiv). It is also not without significance that some *Bhuiyan* families continue to worship the local gods and goddesses as the only appropriate agents for the welfare of all castes. A similar process might have been at work in elevating the goddess Danteswary of Bastar beyond the tribal pale (cf. Sinha 1962).

The interaction between minor traditions is a two-way process and is very complex. The hierarchy of gods in the Hindu pantheon has conjoined with the hierarchy of "feudal" lords in the princely states of Orissa, and the locally dominant political power of tribal groups and their popular and folk myths and legends, and also, with powerful cults of minor gods and goddesses. This has led to open the avenues for close interaction with the Hindu castes and Hindu religion. The Raja of Sambalpur adopted the tribal goddess, Samalai, who was worshipped by the local *Sahara* (*Savara*) tribe as the state deity, who came to the aid of the state during crisis (cf. S.P. Dash 1962:301,303-304,307-308,342). The Rajas have also played a significant role in the creation of new castes not only from among the Hindus themselves, but even out of the tribal communities. (cf. Mahapatra, 1984).

Sinha in his brilliant analysis of the state formation and Rajput myth in the tribal areas of central India (1962) has thrown light on the role of the tribal chiefs and feudal overlords in the spread and intensification of the Brahmanical tradition in tribal areas. The induction of ritual specialists and service castes was necessitated by the urge to follow the model of the *Rajput* or *Kshatriya* rulers. This, in turn, resulted in the introduction of Hindu gods, rituals,

festivals, ideas, beliefs, and values (Sinha 1957, 1962), besides effecting internal stratification based on grades of assimilation into higher Hindu caste culture and interaction with higher Hindu castes. These processes must have gone on not only in Chhattisgarh and the former *Gond* states of Central India and in the Manbhum areas among the *Gond*, *Bhumij*, and allied tribes, but must also have taken place in the Orissan princedoms, where most of the princes were either themselves of tribal origin, or were adopted by the dominant tribal groups, or were heavily dependent on their tribal supporters. (cf. Mahapatra, 1987).

The state deity and the paramount divine king in Orissa were served by a complement of castes, who attended to various ritual and secular tasks. But, because these tasks were performed for divinities, whether in temples or palaces, caste duties acquired the characteristics of ritual obligations. **In this sense, the caste system may be conceived as a ritual organization**. As the vassal kings also assumed divinity in the image of the paramount king, and as the cult of the state deity spread to vassal in the princedoms, caste duties at the level of princedoms also were similarly invested with ritual values. At the village level, we find the end-point in the progressive decrease in elaboration of caste services, which nevertheless retained ritual character after the model of the paramount king and the vassal princes. The vassal chiefs often played a vital role in integrating the tribal peoples in the caste system by helping to "**universalize**" some local traditions centring on local gods and cults. (cf. Mahapatra, 1977a). These developments in Orissa have parallels elsewhere in India; Hocart's theoretical insights probably have been largely borne out by our empirical study in one cultural region, that of Orissa. (cf. Hocart, 1950).

Let me attempt an answer to the question as to why it is that in the Orissa region, as perhaps nowhere else, the state deity has developed such an elaborate, sophisticated, and differentiated organization of caste-based services. Orissa, known in ancient times as Kalinga, was famous as a centre of Jainism and Buddhism,

and some merchants of Orissa were among the first disciples of Lord Gautama. It is well known how these two puritanical religions strove to usher in a caste-free society (without *varna* and four *âshramas*). There must have been widespread, long-standing confusion of castes, social anarchy in the performance of traditional duties, and consequent economic disruptions, as pointed out by Maynard (1972). This could have brought in, as a reaction, stiff, standardized norms and regulations to be enforced by the king. The *Kautilya Arthashâstra* recites the conventional form of duties of the four *varna* and then goes on to assert: "The observance of duty leads a man to bliss. When it is violated, the world will come to an end owing to the confusion of castes and duties. Hence the king shall never allow people to swerve from their duties." (Maynard, 1972:90). This enhancement of royal responsibility to bring back the caste order to its normal efficacy is a plausible guess on the part of Maynard.

There is another consideration for us to take note of. In Orissa, well known all over India at least since Ashoka's days, it must have been felt that the tribal component of the population would become overpowering if allowed to remain too long outside the Hindu social and religious system. And this could not be tolerated, because Orissa forms a continuous link with Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Central India. In this context, it is not surprising to find suddenly one Indradyumna, the legendary king of North India, with whom all the gods are pleased and who can go to *Brahmaloka* in his mortal body, coming to Orissa to elevate an unknown god of the local tribal *Savaras* to the status of a supreme deity (Lord Jagannatha) of the Hindus of India. Similar might have been the attempt by some other king to elevate the local Shiva Linga, worshipped by the *Savara*, to the status of a deity (Lord Lingaraja) of all-India importance at Bhubaneswar **Ekamra Kshetra**. It is also significant that the great anti-Buddhist saint Shankaracharya is said to have visited **Purushottama-Kshetra** (Puri), one of the foremost sacred pilgrimage centres in the eighth century, and to have composed the famous *Jagannathashtakam*. A monastery

(*math*) established by him was shifted to Puri in the ninth century where it assumed tremendous importance in the management of temple rituals of Lord Jagannatha (cf. Mishra, 1971:151-152). The Shaiva King Yayati Keshari, perhaps the same as Mahashivagupta Yayati II of South Koshala, the doyen of the Somavamshi emperors of Orissa, is alleged to have built the Lord Jagannatha temple at Puri and the Lord Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar. He is reputed to have brought Veda-knowing Brahmanas from north India, held a famous public horse sacrifice, and to have reestablished Brahmanism in Orissa in the tenth century. In acknowledgement of his contributions, he is popularly designated Indradyumna II (cf. Mishra 1971:30-32).

The descendants of the original tribal priest were, however, retained as '*sevaka*' of the gods. Their original rights, privileges and most of the ritual services were also retained. Thus, they "formed a sort of cultural bridge between the tribal people inhabiting the area on one hand and the Hindu royalty and the Brahmanas on the other... both the political-military power or the royalty and the brahmanas needed the original tribal priests in order to strengthen their newly established bond with the now Hinduized tribal shrine/deity and through the same with the tribal population inhabiting the area..." (Dash, G. 1998:102). The non-brahmana priests of the now Hinduized tribal shrine/deity and their descendants "got an opportunity to get Hinduized. At the same time some kind of pressure was also brought to bear upon them to get Hinduized because they had to compete with brahmana priests, their rivals in the priestly profession". Thus, we find, there was a wide band of cultural synthesis by Brahmanizing/Hinduizing the tribal shrines and tribal gods, the ritual services and the tribal priests themselves in the process of *sanskritization* of their life ways by adopting a new *jati* name and a new origin myth. (cf. ibid. 103-106).

Similarly, Mahapatra (1977a: 166) brings out the integration of the descendants of the tribal priests with the priestly profession

serving two most important gods in Orissa. Here Lord Lingaraja is seen wielding both ritual and secular authority and performing other roles through kinship, kingship, and property institutions among gods and men in His *Ekamra-Kshetra*. The temple servants here, as at Puri, invite the god on the occasion of auspicious ceremonies in their families. The funeral pyre is ignited with fire from the temple, at least in the case of Brahmana *sevaks*; and the *Daitâpati* (descendants of *Savara* (tribal) worshipper of Lord Jagannatha) perform the "funeral rites" of the Lord when a new set of images is made every twelve years. Besides, the *Daitâpati sevaks* take charge of the Lord's decoration, worship, and offering of fruits, etc. from the day the Lord falls ill until the end of the Car festival. As the *Daitâpati* are considered to be family members of Lord Jagannatha, they share the familial (*gyântisâra*) dishes (cf. Mishra 1971: 93-96). **All of this very much corroborates Hocart's view (1950: 67) that "in India the Church and the State are one.**" (Mahapatra, 1977a) (Note: *Pati are Brahmana sevaks who work with Daitas* and are separate ethnically, as per the Home Department publication 1977).

Hinduization, Tribalization and Retribalization

The resurrection of Brahmanism was aided by the process of "**universalization**" which, it appears, must have been a very ancient and recurrent process in the orthogenetic growth of Indian civilization. But this was especially imperative and expedient in the largely tribal region known as Dandakaranya or Jharkhand, (which was the hinterland of the Orissa coast), where the spread of the Jagannatha cult in the interior came in handy for holding up the caste services as ritual obligations, sacred and inviolable. To aid in this process, the Rajas, many of whom were tribal in origin, founded numerous Brahmana villages in their princedoms. No wonder, therefore, that "in the Protected States of India few chiefs have retained their position as the paramount caste authority to such an extent as the chief of the Feudatory States of Orissa, a

tract long isolated and untouched by modernizing influences." (O'Malley 1932:64-65, cf. Mahapatra, 1984). Whether this assertion is valid or not, the fact remains that most of the numerous and powerful tribes inhabiting the northern, western and southern hills and plateaus, such as the *Bhuiyan*, the *Bathudi*, the *Gond*, the *Binjhal* or *Binjhwar*, large sections of the *Kond* and *Savara*, the *Bhumia*, and the *Amanatya* etc., have come to be more or less assimilated to the Hindu peasantry and are often considered equivalent in status to clean castes. **For once, Elwin (1943) has been proved wrong, because Hinduization has not left the tribesmen in the dungeons of low menial status in Hindu society**.

If tribes and their gods were Hinduized or Sanskritized or Brahmanized, there was also a counter-process in operation in the hills. We have well-researched reports by Professor F.G. Bailey from the Kondhmal hills of Phulbani district of Orissa, the proverbial abode of the *Kond* or *Khond* tribe. These hills partly owed allegiance to the Raja of Boad (Boud).

Long before the British army marched into these hills every year between 1840 and 1850 to pacify the turbulent *Kondh* and wean them away from *Meriah* human sacrifice to their earth goddess for better harvest of paddy and turmeric cash crop, there were colonies of warrior chiefs in fortified villages amidst the *Kondh* territory. Many Oriya villages can claim to have been in the hills for about 300 years or so. Bisipara, the first headquarters of the British for civil administration was founded by Oriya warriors owing allegiance of some sort to Orissa's Rajas or rulers in the foothills of Ganjam. "The relation of the colonies with the mother state is not clear; but we know that the Hill Chiefs were rather Lords of the Marches, owing allegiance and often refusing it, than proconsuls administering a colony." (Bailey, 1955:110). From 1850 onwards, more Oriyas came from the south to join those who were already there as the British administration stabilized. These settlers added to the earlier adventurers, and increased the pressure on the land traditionally owned collectively

by a *Kondh* clan, called *Muttah*. The earlier settlers, *Pan* or *Pano*, a formerly untouchable caste from the plains, who must have immigrated even earlier than the Oriya warrior (*Suda*) *Paika* (foot soldier), was already an essential hanger-on in the *Kondh* settlements. There was at least one *Pano* family to each settlement, functioning as messenger, interpreter and middleman in business transaction, as also provider of liquor, sacrificial animal for rituals (very important in the *Kondh* system of health care and well-being) and also of human victims for the *meriah* sacrifice. The *Kondh Pan*, as they were called by Bailey, in contradistinction to Oriya *Pan* who came later on, were for all practical purposes speaking *Kui*, the *Kondh* language, participating in their rituals, world view and values, and adept in *Kond* dancing and music. Even the warrior and other Hindu caste families who were in the Oriya villages surrounded by *Kondh* villages, also mastered *Kui*, participated in *Kondh* rituals etc. Bailey observes that even though the *Kondh* and the Oriya lived in separate villages, "there has been intermarriage, although not extensively since such marriages offend the rules of caste. It is also clear from records and tradition that Oriyas were fully committed in the *Kond* ritual of human sacrifice. Even today many rites in an Oriya village are in essence *Kond* rites." (Bailey, 1955:119). **In this manner, one can say that there was *tribalization* of Oriya caste men in the hills**. Many of the settlers, including the warrior and the *Pan*, cultivated swiddens or plots of shifting cultivation to supplement their livelihood. Of course, the Oriya Muttahheads, Bailey's Hill Chiefs, in a way politically supplanting the *Kondh* clan chiefs, had constructed Jagannatha temples or temples of other Hindu gods and goddesses, and had sought the participation of the *Kondh* in their Hindu rituals. **This is the process in which the *Kondh* had become Hinduized in the Kondhmals and the *Saora* were Hinduized in the Ganjam Agencies (now in Gajapati district)**.

In the *Saora* land, we find at least 7 grades of Hinduized *Saora*, called *Sudha Sabar* in self-designation: *Jurei, Jara, Bhima, Jati, Sarda, Mala* and *Sunapania*, the last having travelled the farthest

towards **Hinduization** and accorded the highest prestige. All the grades of *Sudha Sabar* emphasize their dissociation from the primitive *Lanjia Saora*, and their superiority to both *Lanjia Saora* and the Christianized *Saora*. The last is even more despised as they are accused of hobnobbing with the *Christian Pan*, the converted "untouchable" caste. Each of these seven grades of *Sudha Shabar* is endogamous and exclusive in commensal and connubial relations, and does not undertake swidden cultivation, which the *Lanjia Saora* indulge in, and is a low-status marker. They have abjured beef, pork, animal sacrifice, observe purity-pollution regimen of the local Hindus, cremate their dead, believe in heaven and hell, and salvation (*moksha*) of Hindu theology. It seems, the groups are in the process of evolving some sort of caste-stratification and have more or less taken up other diacritical marks of castes. (cf. G. Mohapatra 1982-83:189). They have innovated *Kula Melâ* (community assembly), "similar to the caste councils of the local Hindus in their relations with the primitive groups of *Saora* and the deviants are fined and punished. The significant function of the *Kulamelâ* is to keep records of their group principles and to add or to drop out, the new or old principles standing in the way of upward social mobility in the region… The *Sudha Sabar* make an effort to integrate and identify themselves with the Hindu castes of the neighbouring society." (G. Mohapatra, 1982-83:188).

But Bailey also refers to some ambivalence in the *Kondh* situation in regard to their **Hinduization** or **Sanskritization**. "It is at first sight a paradox that while the *Konds* are pleased to insist that they are *Adibâsis* - for obvious reasons - and while they maintain a traditional hatred of Oriyas (although, of course, there are frequent friendly relations between individuals), they are, nevertheless progressively discarding their own customs and assuming what they consider Oriya customs. ... even the most *'Oriya-ized' Kond* ... is respected by other *Konds* for his behaviour, and it is not thought illogical to combine outspoken dislike of Oriyas, and outspoken defence of *Kond* value and custom, with

implicit acceptance of Oriya values. The *Konds*, in other words, are being Sanskritized".... "When they are vehemently in favour of their own culture (at least in words) and while they have everything to gain from emphasizing their difference from Oriyas, nevertheless, progressive *Konds* take on the manners and customs of Hindu gentleman, and are not spurned by their fellow-*Konds* for doing so." (Bailey, 1960:99). But Bailey also sees the end of the tunnel in the vortex of the present political changes. "A tribal society became intermingled with people whose lives were ordered by the caste system, and both these, in their turn, have become involved in a 'modern' political system (using that term as a convenient short reference to the bureaucratic administration and the parliamentary democracy).... **Their (*Konds'*) excursion into the caste system has been brief, since before they became completely involved that system was itself modified and changed by the Administration, and it now seems that the *Konds* will never become a dependent caste divided between small chieftaincies. They, with other *Adibasis*, are becoming a pressure group in State politics." (Bailey, 1960:100-101). In fairness to the development in Kondhamal region of Phulbani district, it may be said that the Hinduization process has not aborted everywhere.** The *Desia Kondh* in large parts of Kondhamal region have forgotten their *Kui* language and have become involved in social reform movements of Utkal Kui Samaj for status enhancement, although they have also floated a *Kui-Lipi*, a script for *Kui* language.

The *Santal*, whose traditional elite had at one stage adopted Hindu rituals, values and even had engaged Brahmana priests, made an about-turn after Pandit Raghunath Murmu created *Ol Chiki* script for *Santali* and other *Munda* languages, and his creative cultural resurgence flowered into the political agenda of the Jharkhand Party facilitate the political rank path in place of the status-mobility path into **Hinduization** and caste model. There was a transitional period in which the *Santal* elite, especially the educated men, went to the extent of re-emphasizing their tribal

origin and harped on the differences with *diku* outsiders, even in an aggressively offending manner by exhibiting cow skulls and other insignia of old tribal culture, repugnant to the local Hindu society. In this sense, what happened was clearly a revivalistic phase of ***re-tribalization*** of the *Santal* in north Orissa and South Bihar (cf. Orans, 1965, Mahapatra, 1968, S. Mahapatra, 1986). It is one thing that the *Santal* exerted in search of a Great Tradition by inventing a script, revamping the traditional religion into more ethically charged *Sarna* religion, and composing literature, secular and mythical. This obviously helped in their identity reinforcement. Similar attempts at identity-reinforcement were also behind the invention of script and creating literature among other tribes. But it is another thing to have an aggressive stance against the local Hindu neighbours, with whom the immigrant tribal groups, like the *Santal*, *Ho*, *Oraon* and *Munda*, had co-existed for at least 200 years, on being invited to settle in former princely states of Gangpur, Bonai, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj in northern Orissa. This confrontation was in the spirit of a challenge in political terms, whereas the *Kondh* and *Saora* of South Orissa might have had ambivalence, but they also wanted to be aligned with the local Oriya political forces to play for political gains in the wider, State arena.

On the other hand, the largely Hinduized *Gond* of Western Orissa, who have been accepted as a clean caste with Brahmana and other service or functional castes serving them in their family rituals have organized the *Gond Jatiya Mahasabha* (*Pan-Gond* Caste Super-Association) and *Gond Sanskrutika Samaj* (*Gond* Cultural Association) for furtherance of *Gond* culture in consonance with high caste status and modern development values. Similarly, the largely Hinduized *Hill Bhuiyan* of Northern Orissa have organized *Bhauma Samaj* since 1969 in order to undertake measures for social, cultural, and economic advancement and "to check exploitation by outsiders and to pursue the Government to look into for their all-round improvement" (Behera, 1973-74:104). These are also concerted and planned steps in the direction of

dignity-enhancement and identity-reinforcement as against the more backward tribes and castes in the locality; **but the *Gond* and the *Bhuiyan* go about this without confrontation and without venom against the local people. This is largely because there has been a rapprochement and give-and-take between these locally dominant indigenous tribes and the local non-tribal people with the Hindu princes of the ex-feudatory states moderating and modulating their encounter over centuries, if not millennia.**

It is also interesting to note that these dominating tribes speak Oriya, the regional language, of course, in local dialects, whereas the more politically organized immigrant tribes usually do not speak Oriya as the mother tongue. The *Gond* have in recent decades have undergone a *nominal* or *symbolic* **retribalization** in Orissa, as their educated elite realized that re-emphasizing their tribal past would bring them greater political, economic and service dividends, than they were already enjoying as members of a numerous scheduled tribe in Orissa. We may recall that in the 1950s the traditional *Gond* elite in Orissa had taken to written representations and agitation against the Government including them in the list of Scheduled Tribe. For, they were the local chiefs, zamindars and substantial landlords in Western, Northern, and even in Southern Orissa, and had **progressed very far in the direction of assimilation as a high Hindu caste. In other words, they had crossed the Rubicon and could not go back**. But later on, even if they are not going back, at least the educated elite tried to look back and make noises about their glorious tribal heritage and identity. This way they will obviously strengthen their identity and ego, **but they are not prepared to lose the best of both the worlds!**

We must remember that in Orissa even five centuries ago, the proportion of the tribal people to others was much higher, and almost all the Rajas sponsored the settlement of Brahmanas and other high castes, artisan castes and service castes, besides agricultural and warrior castes for agricultural, industrial, commercial and religio-cultural development, and development

of the defence capacities of the princely states. Some Rajas like Dayanidhi Indra Deo of Bonai also sponsored largescale settlement of immigrant tribes from Ranchi and Singhbhum districts of Bihar (Jharkhand) in the 17th century, and these were the tribes like *Munda, Ho* or *Kolha*, and *Oraon* who were better cultivators as settled agriculturists in contrast with the indigenous shifting cultivator *Bhuiyan* tribe. Similarly, Rajas in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar encouraged the Bihar tribes like *Ho* or *Kolha, Santal* and the *Kurmi-Mahato* to settle in the plateaus and valleys, and also in the forests with the ostensible goal of general development of the region. If we analyze it further, there were very strong economic as well as political and socio-cultural reasons behind this sponsorship of the immigrant tribes and castes.

We have noted that the Rajas had played active roles in integrating the diverse castes and tribes, social and cultural groups in their princedoms. The palace in a Hindu kingdom (princely state or feudatory state) may be conceived as the microcosm of the princely state in Orissa. The primordial sentiments and moral bindings of various chiefdoms, regions, tribes and castes in a princely state were sought to be centered round the royal dynasty, its seat in the palace-fort and in the person of the Raja and Rani, through the assemblages of gods and goddesses, even aniconic tribal deities, and observance of rituals, cults, and ceremonies there, which made the subjects participants in the politico-ritual process of consolidation of the princedom.

On the other hand, how there had been a persistent effort by castes and tribes to reinforce their identity and dignity and to improve their image or status in society by various means. For example, by undertaking reforms of their old customs and institutions, or by *identity expansion* (all *Munda*-speaking tribes and Dravidian-speaking *Oraon* of Chotanagpur ranged against the non-tribal *diku* outsiders and agitated for a state of their own with districts from Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal where these tribesmen are in substantial number), or by making the tribal or caste brethren of one's own ethnic group act as a pressure group, or by

encouraging intermarriage between subcastes or among all tribesemen belonging to Christianity or *Sarna Dharma*, or as often happens, by taking all or some of these strategic steps together. All this has become patently possible because of the empowerment process and the emergence of a strong, educated elite among the tribal and caste groups, who focus on fast change and development to take their 'backward' people out of their old social moorings and constraints of old values. In this process, the educated elite have been instrumental in the movement for discarding their old values and taking recourse to political action. This invariably leads to the arrest of the social status mobility movements in favour of adopting the political rank path, when the endeavour towards social status mobility movement has not always yielded much result due to resistance of the higher status groups, which fear losing their relative higher status, as in the caste hierarchy, or valuable social privileges.

However, we must also note that even at the most intense struggle for prestigious recognition of *Santali* language and script as a part of the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India, there was no uprising of *ultra-Santal* nationalism and communalism against the regional society of Orissa. "The *Santal* people do not consider themselves as of extraneous origin but as the nationals of the Indian dominion. The adoption of a single script "*Ol Chiki*" among themselves, will add to the glorious tradition of multiracial, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious growth in India." Such was the sentiment enshrined in the declaration by the Chairman of the All India *Adivasi* Cultural Committee delivered by him in the welcome address in 1973. (cf. S. Mahapatra, 1986: 73-74). In another forum, the First All-India *Adivasi* Cultural Function 1973 another tribal leader claimed that the *Santal* were the largest group among the *Adivasis*. He highlighted the other cultural flow from the tribal end to the Aryan language and culture. "The deities the Aryans worship are mostly *Adivasis* of ancient times. Linguistically the Aryans called the *Santali* language a dialect but they have borrowed fifty percent *Santali* words. The *Santali* language and culture have (made) great contributions to the world civilization...." as reported by S. Mahapatra, (1986: 73).

The *Santal*, one of the foremost and forward-looking tribal group in Orissa, had (in some areas) adopted the Baptist (American) way of Christianity during the British days, and also revitalized their tribal religion and cultural values under the leadership of Guru Gomke Pandit Raghunath Murmu in the line of the world religions, like Christianity and Hinduism. He emphasized thrift and abstinence from liquor and avoidance of wasteful ostentation and valued the ethical principles of high living in the manner of high traditional Hindu or Christian society. In the words of Professor B.K. Roy Burman the *Santal* and *Khasi* and other highly educated, mobile and progressive tribal groups in Chhotanagpur and Northeastern India no longer fitted the description of "**primitive tribes**" but became instead "**post-primitive**" (cf. Roy Burman 1970), though still officially scheduled tribes. They could and would go to any length in transcending their old moorings in suffocating small society, to meet men of the world and behave on equal terms with others in India and abroad. As cultural fall-out of this process, Roy Burman has not fully taken up the issue of cultural isolation, the alienation of the tribal elite, who may take advantage of their tribal affiliation, privileges and trappings, but would not fully commit themselves to the service and devotion to the land, the society and the community concerns of their own village folk. **The tribal elites, normally, become part of the national elite and pursue their own interests and goals as such, and not as inheritors of their tribal heritage.** (cf. Roy Burman 1994). However, we find similar cultural and social alienation of the elites of other ethnic and regional groups in Orissa today. Perhaps, it has its rationale. If there was cultural synthesis between the tribal and the non-tribal peoples at the mass level in the past, there has also been juxtaposition of the elites vis-a-vis their own indigenous ethnic cultures in the tribal or in the non-tribal societies at present. In this also Orissa follows the general pattern in our country and the spirit of the age.

At the end, it may be interesting to examine how the widely variable, heterogeneous Indian civilization could survive for

centuries with an apparently rigid caste system in place. Burton Stein (1967), studying the medieval South Indian politics, observed "widespread and persistent examples of social mobility." He emphasized the contrast between theory and practice by highlighting the crucial fact of "**very low birth**" status of the rulers of South India and North India. In this context he noted : **"The capacity of both ancient and medieval Indian society to ascribe to its actual rulers, frequently men of low social origins, a "clean" or "kshatriya" rank may afford one of the explanations for the durability and longevity of the unique civilization of India."**

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List of earlier delivered N.K. Bose Memorial Lectures

1st 1993	The Heritage of Nirmal Kumar Bose Indian Civilization : Structure and Change by **S.C. Sinha**
2nd 1996	Gandhi's Impact on Bose's Scholarship. Rabindranath and Gandhi : Response to Indian Reality. by **B.K. Bhattacharyya**
3rd 1997	Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose and His contribution to Indian Temple Architecture The Prathistha-Lakshasamuccaya and the Architecture of Kalinga. by **M.A. Dhaky**
4th 2000	Professor Bose on the Adivasi of India Gods of the Tharus of the Himalayan Tarai by **T.N. Pandey**
5th 2002	Nirmal Kumar Bose and Field Research : The North-East India Experience Social Formation and Ethnic Identities in North – East India : A Preliminary Statement. by **A.C. Bhagbati**

Nirmal Kumar Bose, one of India's greatest sons, a humanist, a Gandhian and a radical anthropologist for whom social reconstruction was more important than building sociological theories – was a carry over of the nineteenth century Renaissance in Bengal. He was a great mind, a great visionary who was never confined to the conventional boundary of an academic discipline, be it anthropology, geography, geology, prehistory, archaeology, and even gandhiology (if that term may be used). Professor Bose used anthropology to demonstrate India's unity in the diversity of cultures. He possessed in his heart a precious thing – the love for his countrymen – that was much greater than his passion for anthropology. Historians of world anthropology are aware of Bose's pioneer thinking and his original contribution to the concept of culture. But, regrettably and not so regrettably, Bose could not pursue it further, because in his judgment something else was more important. That was India's national Freedom Movement. He preferred to remain in the prison rather than in the luxury of intellectual pursuit.

IGNCA Memorial Lecture Series was initiated in honour of renowned scholars who have done singular service and made path-breaking contributions in different fields of study, and whose academic approach and directions are of direct relevance to the conceptual base of the Centre. In this Memorial Lecture Series, so far included, are Hazariprasad Dwivevi (1907-1979), the great stalwart of Hindi literature, Nirmal Kumar Bose (1901-1972), an eminent anthropologist, and Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (1890-1977), a noted linguist.

Lakshman Kumar Mahapatra (b.1929), an eminent anthropologist and educationist of international fame, has served Utkal and Sambalpur Universities as Vice-Chancellor. He has also been Director and Chairman to Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies under the ICSSR. He has a long academic career since 1954 in research and teaching, which took him to various universities including Visiting Professorship to Germany and National Fellowship of ICSSR and Ford Foundation Fellowship to Indonesia. He was engaged as the Emeritus Fellow (UGC) at Utkal University in comparative research in rural development in Indonesia and India. He has a deep understanding of complex development issues and problems of the tribal people of India and Indonesia. Recipient of several national and international distinctions and awards. He has authored several papers and many books, some of them are : *Tribal Development in India : Myth and Reality; Resettlement, Impoverishment and Reconstruction in India : Development for the Deprived; State, Society and Religion : Culturehistorical Comparative Perspectives of Southeast Asia* and *People and Cultural Traditions of Orissa : Civilization, Society and World View.*